

### Utah Division of Forestry

Preparing for the possibility of wildland fire paid off last summer for the small southwestern Utah town of Central. On August 12, lightning ignited the Cal Hollow Fire in piñon and juniper woodland northwest of town. The fire, pushed by afternoon winds, headed straight for the town. More than 100 homes were evacuated, but they were saved by a fuelbreak built as a cooperative effort by the people of Central and several state and federal agencies using National Fire Plan funds and a framework for collaboration initiated by the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy.

Like many wildland/urban interface communities, the community of Central is surrounded by state, private, BLM, and Forest Service lands. All these groups worked as a team under a chartered organization called The Color Country Fuels and WUI Committee to protect the community from fire.

And their efforts paid off. The fuel break slowed the fire. "That gave us a chance to get the airtankers there," said Fire Warden Bill Murphy. "The fuel break was the key. When the fire moved into the crowns of the trees, I knew for sure we would have lost homes without the fuelbreak."

Firefighters had the fire contained by 10:00 p.m. and residents returned to their homes. No one was hurt. No structures were lost.

First responders were members of the Central Volunteer Fire Department. National Fire Plan money also paid for equipment and training for the department. District Ranger Bevan Killpack said a few years ago the results would have been different; the community was not prepared for fire.



**The community of Central, Utah, saved by its fuel break**

Central was listed as one of the top ten "communities at risk" for wildfire in Utah, and the Color Country Fuels and WUI Committee decided that the area would make an excellent choice for a demo project under President Bush's Healthy Forests Initiative.

"Communities like Central are sprouting up all over the nation in the wildland/urban interface," said BLM Cedar City Field Office Manager Todd Christensen. "Creating defensible space both within and outside the community gave us the opportunity to succeed. This is what the Healthy Forests Initiative is all about."

The [utahfireinfo.gov](http://utahfireinfo.gov) website has a longer story and photos online.